



Town of Groton, Connecticut

Meeting Minutes

Town Council Committee of the Whole

45 Fort Hill Road
Groton, CT 06340-4394
Town Clerk 860-441-6640
Town Manager
860-441-6630

Mayor Heather Bond Somers, Councilors Dean G. Antipas, Bruce S. Flax, Bill Johnson, Frank O'Beirne, Jr., Deborah L. Peruzzotti, Rita M. Schmidt, James L. Streeter, and Harry A. Watson

Tuesday, July 10, 2012

7:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Somers called the meeting to order at 6:58 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mayor Somers, Councilor Flax, Councilor Johnson, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Schmidt, Councilor Streeter and Councilor Watson

Members Absent: Councilor Antipas and Councilor Peruzzotti

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger and Executive Assistant Nicki Bresnayan.

3. Calendar and Communications

None.

4. Approval of Minutes

2012-0214 Approval of Minutes (Committee of the Whole)

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the Town Council Committee of the Whole meeting of June 26, 2012 are hereby accepted and approved.

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Flax, to adopt.

The motion carried unanimously

5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

6. NEW BUSINESS

2012-0148 Tax Abatement/Deferral/Exemption Programs - Update

Discussed and Recommended no action taken

Town Manager Oefinger noted that the Council previously received a briefing from the Director of Finance regarding various abatement/deferral/exemption programs available to Groton taxpayers. The Council discussed the "poor and unable to pay" program and the process for applying and a concern was expressed that applicants have to appear before the Council at a televised meeting. The Director of Finance has provided additional background information on the establishment of the program noting that the poor and unable to pay applications are reviewed by the Finance Committee whose meetings are not televised.

2012-0208 Sandy Hollow Road Resurfacing

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger noted a proposed resurfacing project for Sandy Hollow Road, which is a designated scenic road. Any modification to a scenic road requires the Town Council to conduct a public hearing. The recommended date for the public hearing is August 7th. It may be necessary to approve the project the same night or at a special meeting since the contractors are scheduled for mid-August.

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Flax, to schedule a public hearing on resurfacing of Sandy Hollow Road on August 7, 2012.

The motion carried unanimously

2012-0210 Historic Documents Preservation Grant (2013)

Discussed

Town Manager Oefinger noted that the grant would be used to replace software in the Town Clerk's Office. No matching dollars are required.

A motion was made by Councilor Streeter, seconded by Councilor Watson, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

2012-0200 Adoption of an Ordinance Changing and Redefining the Voting Districts

Tabled

Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher and Registrars of Voters Steve Massett and Dave Rose were present to address the Council. The Town Clerk noted that this issue involved a combination of voting districts, but it is not clear that it should be acted on yet. This agenda item and the following item were tabled.

2012-0201 Resolution Authorizing Use of a Description of the Ordinance Changing and Redefining the Voting Districts

Tabled

2012-0216 Voting District Changes

Discussed

Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher noted that this referral is in response to changes in the congressional district plan requiring a modification of Town voting districts 1, 4 and 5. The Town Clerk requested a resolution from the Town Council authorizing the boundary changes.

Town Manager Oefinger noted that a similar procedure was followed in 1992 and 2002. The resolution would make minor adjustments to the voting districts and will have to be followed up with an ordinance. Any combination of districts could be done by another ordinance. The resolution will establish the districts for the upcoming elections. Watson disclosed that he is a candidate in the 41st district.

A motion was made by Councilor Schmidt, seconded by Councilor Flax, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

2012-0212 Mystic Arts Center Parking Lot Agreement - Update

Discussed

The Town Manager provided the summary for the third week of charges at the Mystic Arts Center (MAC) parking lot. Mayor Somers explained that the majority of users are staying in the lot from two to three hours. The Town has spent \$32,376.50 of \$50,000 allocated to date so it appears the plan has been very successful. Mayor Somers noted that the Town could reduce the number of free parking hours, but it would not have a significant effect because most people are parking less than 5 hours. Mayor Somers has spoken with a number of merchants and business has improved. The merchants thanked the Council for the free parking and completing the paving.

Town Manager Oefinger explained that there are not enough funds remaining allow free parking until August 5th as originally envisioned. Councilor Flax suggested that the MAC be approached to extend the time at the guaranteed \$50,000. Mayor Somers reminded the Council that some Councilors wanted to have a weekly accounting rather than a flat weekly fee. Mayor Somers will be meeting with representatives of MAC. Councilor Streeter suggested that perhaps the contractor can contribute to extending the free parking.

2012-0196 Mystic Streetscape Project - Update**Discussed**

Town Manager Oefinger provided a schedule for the next week for the project. Paving was completed last week. Work is progressing on a number of fronts to bring Phase I to a close. The Town is waiting for an updated schedule from the contractor. The Town Manager reviewed upcoming work. Mayor Somers noted a meeting on the project this Friday at the Mystic Arts Center.

2012-0213 Adoption of Ordinance for Road Maintenance and Rehabilitation**Discussed**

The Town Manager explained the need to recess the Committee of the Whole meeting for a special meeting of the Town Council and a public hearing on the ordinance prior to adoption.

He distributed a letter from Marian Galbraith in support of the project and two suggested resolutions for adoption of the ordinance and authorization to use a description of the ordinance for publication purposes. There are two minor typographical changes suggested by the Town Attorney that must be noted during the public hearing.

The Committee of the Whole meeting recessed at 7:28 p.m. for a special meeting of the Town Council.

The Committee of the Whole meeting reconvened at 7:47 p.m.

A motion was made by Councilor Schmidt, seconded by Councilor Watson, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

Councilor Flax will not support this ordinance because it is circumventing the political process in the Town. He would rather see the three entities work together on the roads. Councilor Flax asked for the cost to pave a road in the Town per linear foot or some other measurement. Councilor O'Beirne noted that the bond ordinance opens a budget item to a political process that is not available to citizens for any other budget item. A referendum on a five year budget item is an extension of the political process rather than circumvention. Councilor Johnson noted that sending this bond ordinance to referendum is not the same as supporting the project. Councilor Streeter noted that over the years during the budget process the funding for highways has been chopped over and over which caused the need for this project. He cited Thames Street as an example. There has been extreme frustration in the City that funding was not made available for their road projects. This gives the voters the opportunity to have a say on the roads. Councilor Streeter encouraged the Council to make money available in the budget for roads so that the Town does not have to bond as much. Councilor Schmidt agreed that the voters get to indicate their preference and the road improvements will support businesses. Councilor Watson agreed with Councilor O'Beirne. Mayor Somers noted that many municipalities do road maintenance through bonding. She noted that it is easy to take road quality for granted. This is an authorization to bond, but the Town may not need to borrow the entire amount if the Town changes its historical process of cutting funds for streets. The RTM will vote on this bond package so they do have a say in the process. Mayor Somers suggested that this method may even save money versus doing the projects piecemeal. In response to questions by Councilor Flax, the impact of debt on the mill rate and debt service was clarified

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 6 - Mayor Somers, Councilor Johnson, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Schmidt, Councilor Streeter and Councilor Watson
Opposed: 1 - Councilor Flax

2012-0215 Resolution Authorizing Use of a Description of the Ordinance for Road Maintenance and Rehabilitation

A motion was made by Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., seconded by Councilor Watson, that this matter be

Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

7. Consideration of Committee Referral Items as per Town Council Referral List

Recommended for Deletion:

2011-0238	Road Reconstruction Bond Ordinance
	Not Discussed
2012-0069	Police Station Renovations
	Not Discussed
2012-0145	Permanent School Building Committee - Activity Update
	Not Discussed
2012-0157	OpSail 2012 - Update
	Not Discussed
2012-0178	Economic Development Commission - Potential Work Program Items
	Not Discussed

8. OTHER BUSINESS

Councilor Flax suggested changing the ordinance to allow for alcohol consumption at the Esker Point beach concerts. Mayor Somers made a referral to the Committee of the Whole.

Councilor Flax wants to investigate what the Town can learn from the Mystic Streetscape Project moving forward. The Town Manager stated he would like to finish the project first. The request for a referral can be made at a later date.

There will be a special meeting of the Committee of the Whole on Thursday, July 12th at 6:00 p.m. (joint meeting with the Board of Education).

Mayor Somers suggested a special meeting on July 31st to conduct an executive session to discuss the Fitch High School baseball agreement. Councilor O'Beirne expressed opposition to holding a special meeting.

The majority of Councilors were available for the meeting.

The Group I and Committee of the Whole meetings scheduled for August 14th cannot be held due to the primary election. The consensus of the Council was to hold special meetings on Wednesday, August 15th.

The Town Manager distributed an update from Wes Greenleaf on the portable classroom schedule for the middle school consolidation and a letter from Carl Kiely of the Poquonnock Bridge Fire District.

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:17 p.m.